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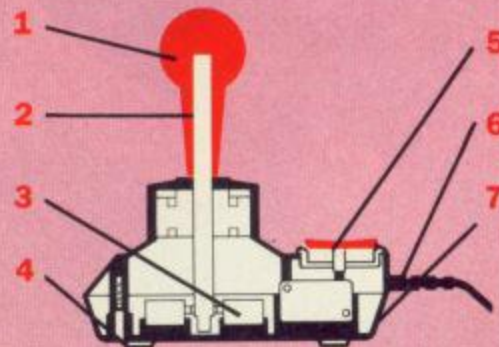
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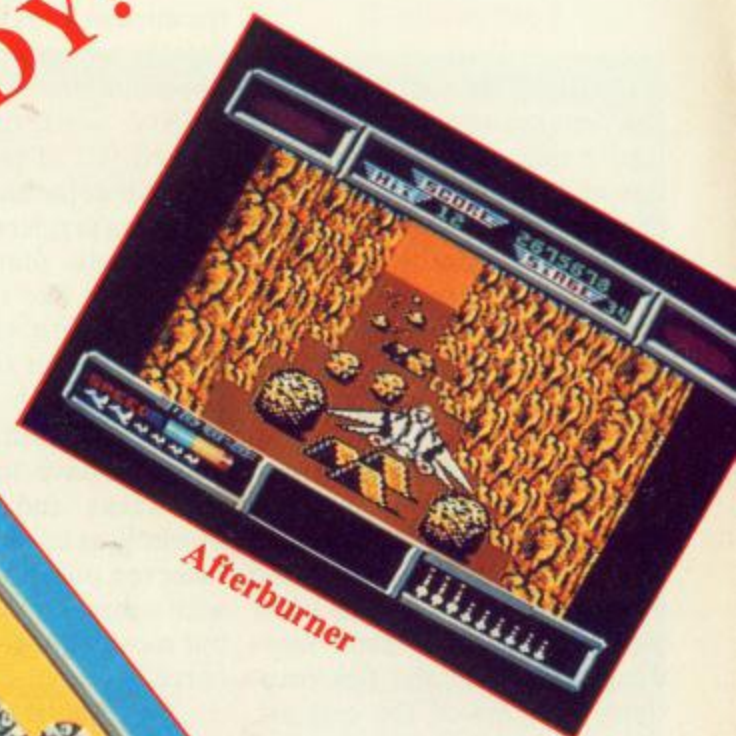
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Afterburner



Thunder Blade

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Times of Lore



Serve and Volley

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Christmas releases**

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GAMES SPECIAL

Last Ninja II

When the Last Ninja appeared and amazed everyone with its superb mix of graphics, adventure and puzzles, conquered the charts, swept the awards and showed just what was possible with eight-bit machines, everyone agreed that it was the last word in kung-fu games. It was also inevitable that there would be a sequel.

Once again, you must don the black suit and mask of the ninja and take up your sword for the inevitable combat that is sure to follow. In this game you will face foes even more dangerous than the fire breathing dragons of the original, in a land more treacherous than the swamps; modern day New York. As Arkamuni, the Last Ninja, you have been sent by

the ancient gods to seek out and defeat your arch enemy, the evil Shogun Kunitoki.

Six different sections packed full of muggers, thugs, corrupt cops and even knife-throwing jugglers will challenge the arcade players, whereas those who like to match their reactions with skill will enjoy the puzzles on the way to the showdown with the evil Kunitoki. These aren't puzzles that you will have to ponder over for weeks and then type in precisely as in some adventures, these are puzzles that you solve with a joystick using some logic but mostly gut-feeling and pure nerve.

Around the main screen are the usual Last Ninja displays: areas where you can scroll through objects that you hold and may need to use, your

score, elapsed time, and bars that represent your strength and that of any opponent that you face. Combat normally involves blows being exchanged using hands and feet, but sometimes weapons can be used, including some that you can hurl from a distance. As battles rage, the strength bars reduce and death visits the combatant whose bar vanishes first.

The main attraction is, once again, the stunning 3D graphics that form the backdrop to the adventure. In this game you'll battle on roof tops that tower above the streets, run the gauntlet of the drugstores downtown, face crooked cops in Central Park and then meet crowbar-wielding muggers just around the next corner just imagine their surprise when

they discover that they're taking on a ninja!

Eventually, you'll learn enough kung-fu moves or find sufficient weapons to keep you alive long enough to stay on the trail of Kunitoki, eventually leading to the final confrontation in his hidden opium den. Before this, you will have had many an hour of kung-fu arcade adventuring, leaving you hoping that this isn't the Last Ninja and looking forward to the prospect of Last Ninja 3. **TH**

Touchline:

Title: Last Ninja 2. **Supplier:** System 3 (Activision), Activision House, 23 Pond Street, Hampstead, London NW3 2PN. **Tel:** 01-431 1101. **Price:** £12.99 (disk).

Considering their prominence in British myths and legends, it is something of a surprise to find that the Tales of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table do not feature more frequently in adventure games. Whilst the exploits of Sirs Gawain, Tristram, Percival and Galahad are reasonably well known, it comes as no great surprise to discover that Level 9, in conjunction with Mandarin Software, are basing their story around the exploits of Sir Lancelot, the greatest and bravest knight of them all.

The games consists of three linked adventures, following the life of Lancelot from his arrival at court, right through

to the quest that ultimately split the Round Table, the search for the Holy Grail.

The story sticks very closely to Malory's medieval version, of the legend, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, so don't expect any Hollywood-style romanticism. Instead, the game follows Lancelot's life, starting with his battle to become the greatest knight of the age. Then come the two tragic love affairs, one with Elaine, during which he fathers Galahad, and the second with Arthur's wife, Queen Guenever, which stems from his excessive sense of duty towards her.

This second affair gives Arthur's enemies the chance to

drive a wedge between him and his greatest friend. It also means that Lancelot is not pure enough of heart to actually complete the quest to find the Holy Grail, although he is granted a vision of it.

The story is accompanied by lashings of Level 9's atmospheric text and there is no need to worry about finding the exact combination of words necessary to solve a puzzle; the Level 9 parser is still recognised as being one of the best in the industry. If you have the disk version, you will also be able to enjoy some stunning illustrations which accompany the text.

Mandarin is also offering

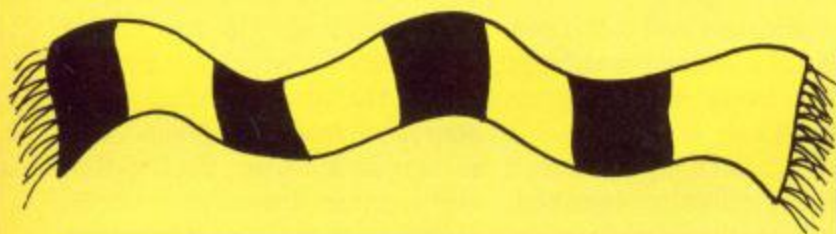
players the chance to search for their own grail! A solid silver goblet, gilded on the inside and encrusted with semi-precious jewels, has been hand-crafted by one of this country's top silversmiths. This incredible prize is worth five thousand pounds and details of how to win it are included with every copy of the game.

Touchline:

Title: Lancelot. **Supplier:** Mandarin Software, Europa House, Adlington Park, Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 4NP. **Tel:** (0625) 878888. **Price:** £14.95 (disk).



GAMES SPECIAL



Emlyn Hughes, the man with the squeaky voice, lucrative TV contracts and the crunching tackle who wore the number six shirt for Liverpool in the Bill Shankley era, now stars in his own football game.

The best way to think of it is to look back at that all time classic, Commodore International Soccer, that was released in 1983 and think of EHIS as the updated version. However, that's only half the story because, behind the Commodore Soccer gameplay, there's a strong strategy element including player statistics and League and Cup competitions.

Each player's statistics describe their running and tackling skills, fitness rating and a record is kept of the number of games they've played and the goals they scored. This information should help you choose your team for the coming matches.

During the match you use the joystick to control the man nearest to the ball, depending on who has possession, and try and dribble down the field to score. That's where the similarity ends. In EHIS the player's abilities decide how well he tackles or how fast he runs which improves an already tried and tested format.

In Commodore's Soccer, ball control consists of drib-

bling and shooting the ball in the direction you're running but, in EHIS, you can either kick the ball along the ground, loft it into the air for crosses or pass towards the right or left as well. Add to that sliding tackles, diving headers and charging your opponent off the ball and you've got a system in which realistic moves can easily be built up. For example, your keeper could roll the ball out to a defender who passes it to a midfielder player, then a smart chip out to the winger (a good runner), who charges down to the line and crosses it into the box for a diving header at goal!

The preproduction copy of EHIS that I was playing didn't have all its features in place

such as the eight team Super League, where you can change the name of any of the teams and players to suit your taste in football. Neither were the Cup competition or championship (whatever that is), or the free kicks or penalties for rough play included. However, all 11 players on either side, a novelty in computer football games, were doing enough to convince me that this is one to look out for.

TH

Touchline:

Title: Emlyn Hughes International Soccer. **Supplier:** Audiogenic, Winchester House, Canning Road, Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 7SJ. **Tel:** 01-861 1166.

Serve and Volley

Sports simulation programs have always proved to be extremely popular and Accolade have enjoyed particular success in this field through games such as Hardball, still the best baseball game around. Now, they have turned their hand to tennis with their latest

title Serve and Volley, distributed by Electronic Arts.

There have been many tennis games before but all of them have suffered from major flaws in their playability or else have proved to be extremely limited in scope. Serve and Volley includes a host of features not previously seen in simulations. Even the sternest critic is likely to be impressed.

To start with, you can choose which surface you play on, grass, clay or concrete, each of which determines the tactics to be employed. If you get too good at the lowest skill level, you still have two more levels to choose from plus a practice mode for beginners. You can also decide whether to play a one-off match or enter a tournament playing against either

the computer or a human opponent.

Emphasis during the play is on stroke selection, timing and ball placement. There are three different serves to choose from: top spin, first serve and slice and the variety continues according to which of five different strokes you opt for. As



GAMES SPECIAL



well as backhand and forehand, you can lob, volley or attempt to kill the point with a devastating smash.

Each player's performance can be individually tweaked. You can adjust your endurance, the relative strength of your forehand and backhand and come to a compromise between power and accuracy. These statistics can be viewed at any time and you can even sit back and let the computer play for you according to your chosen abilities. Matches and tournaments can be saved at any point (no pun intended).

The screen displays the whole court from a sideways

perspective. At the top left of the screen is a window featuring what the programmers call *strobe-o-strobe* graphics. This is an animation frame that shows close-ups of your shots, giving very realistic effects.

Who knows? Serve and Volley may prove to be the one opponent that Steffi Graf couldn't beat with one hand tied behind her back! **GRH**

Touchline:

Title: Serve and Volley **Supplier:** Electronic Arts, 11-49 Station Road, Langley, Berks SL3 8YN. **Tel:** (0753) 49442 **Price:** £9.95 (cass) £14.95 (disk).

Times of Lore

"Oh, I don't like role playing games", someone was saying to me the other day. "Book upon book of rules to be learned, spells to be memorised, maps to be drawn and having to get to grips with all the different commands and then having to learn a completely new set of instructions if I want to switch from Ultima to Bard's Tale to Phantasie.

"No", he went on, "give me something where I can just pick up a joystick and start playing immediately picking up what I need to know as I go along."

"Times of Lore", I replied.

"What, a game all about policemen", my friend countered trying to extract the Michael.

"Not that kind of law - I-o-r-e as in mythology. It's the latest game to come from Origin, already famous for its Ultima series and it's designed for people just like you".

Of course, you will need to read the rules eventually but the game is designed so that you can start playing straight away, using a series of icons at the bottom of the screen to control your character's actions. Yes, this is an all-action, graphic, role-playing game.

The story is set in mists of time, long, long ago. The king-



dom of Albareth is at war, facing hordes of invading barbarians. After a series of desperate struggles, High King Valwyn wins the day but the conflict has taken its toll. The king disappears to seek rest in the lands of the Elden folk, vowing to return after 20 years have passed.

Over 20 years have passed, though, and there are still no roaming brigands. As you might expect, there is an increasing amount of lawlessness and rumours are rife about the fate of the old king and what

troubles will befall the kingdom. It is known that adventurers are being recruited to see if they can sort out the troubles, or at least find out what's going on. Daring missions to strange lands are the order the day, so you decide to pledge your sword to the people of Albareth.

As you wander the land, you will encounter many strange beasts and men, almost all guaranteed to be hostile. There are many places to explore: castles, deserted ruins, dungeons and the general perils

of the wilderness. As you walk along the beach, you wonder if you will need to find a boat to take you to foreign shores in pursuit of your quest.

The graphic display is shown in a Gauntlet-like, 3-D perspective which looks particularly effective. Objects and buildings have a considerable amount of detail drawn into them, adding considerably to the effect. Gameplay takes place in real time so you will need to have all your wits about you, no sitting and pondering your next move here!

One further bonus is that you don't need a disk drive to play Times of Lore - it is available on cassette as a self-contained game, although further volumes in the series will almost certainly be disk only.

For anyone who has not yet experienced the joys of role-playing games, or those who prefer action to strategy, Times of Lore could well prove to be just the game to whet their appetite. **GRH**

Touchline:

Title: Times of Lore **Supplier:** Origin Systems, MicroProse, 2 Market Place, Tetbury, Gloucestershire GL8 8DA. **Tel:** (0666) 54326 **Price:** £9.95 (cass) £12.95 (disk).

GAMES SPECIAL

Ultima V

Almost exactly one year after it was first announced, Ultima V has finally arrived. Devotees of this series, which has achieved something of a cult status, will be raiding their piggy banks in order to buy a copy of the game sight unseen. Others will no doubt want to know how the game compares with other computer role-playing games before splashing out.

About the same length in playing time as its predecessor (100 - 200 hours), Ultima V nevertheless boasts many improvements to what was already an excellent game system.

Whole new areas of Britannia have come to light with the discovery of the New Underworld. Lord British cannot resist the opportunity to go on one last adventure but disaster strikes the party and everybody is captured, apart from one brave soul who escapes to tell

the tale. The people of Britannia, now leaderless, panic and you are summoned once again to try and rid the land of this new evil.

A party of up to six characters can be created to help you on your quest although key alliances will have to be made later on in the game so it might prove prudent to start off with less than a full team. Character generation is achieved by answering a series of moral dilemma questions rather than the random rolling of dice.

The Ultima series works so well because everything within the game meshes together perfectly. There are no glaring anomalies either within the game system or the story. Items and characters not only have a purpose, but also a logical reason for being there in the first place. Weaknesses from previous games have been ironed out or eliminated and a host of new features added. All in all, a game that is a must for any collection. **GRH**



Touchline:

Title: Ultima V **Supplier:** Origin Systems, MicroProse Ltd, 2 Market Place, Tetbury, Gloucestershire GL8 8DA. **Tel:** (0666) 54326 **Price:** £19.95 (disk).

FISH!

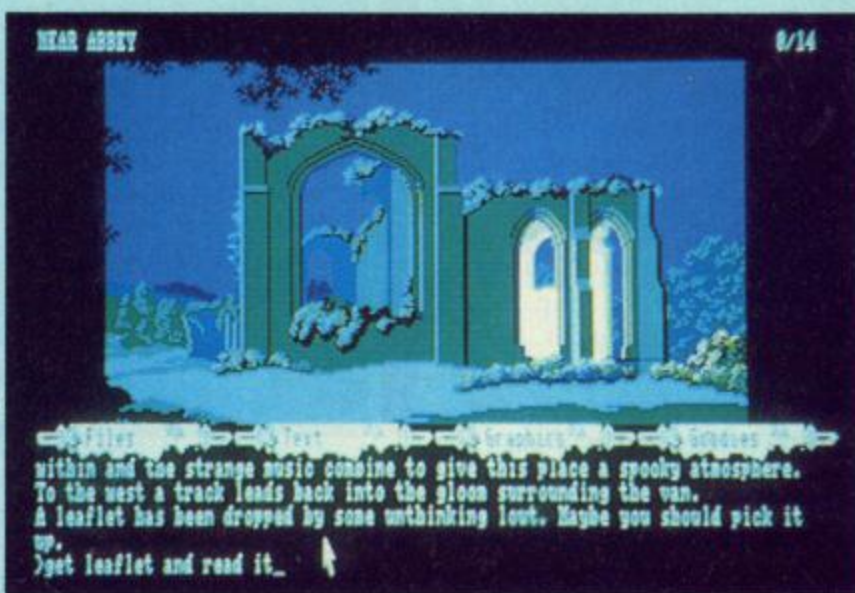
Here's a fishy tale for adventurers who are looking to net a new game packed with puzzles to solve and of course, red herrings. Neither is this an excuse to carp on about fishy puns, besides it's not the right time or place, so don't knock me off my perch and, before you go completely green around the gills, I'll tell you all about it.

FISH! is the latest game from those masters of adventures, Magnetic Scrolls, who's Corruption recently gained the best game award at the British Micro Awards, so you know this new one's going to be good. It's also going to be tough but the superb mix of awful puns, clever puzzles and breathtaking graphics will make the ordeal worthwhile.

As the game begins you are a multi-dimensional espionage operator, happily swimming

around a goldfish bowl, enjoying a spot of R&R, when suddenly a plastic castle drops past your dorsal fin and settles on the bottom of your bowl. This can mean only one thing, another mission has begun. Once again, it's your arch enemies, the Seven Deadly Fins, up to their old tricks of threatening the fishy people of the planet Hydropolis who have just built a device to stop the loss of water from their planet. Unfortunately, the Seven Deadly Fins have stolen the device and spread parts of it throughout the dimensions and, if you don't get them back, the fish people will have had their chips.

Swimming inside the castle leads you to find three doors that each lead into a new dimension but if you want a break from the action you can always play your favourite game, such as the Prawn, on your computer.



If you survive the puns and the missions then you go through a hole in the castle and become the head of the project to make the device which leads you into more problems, more puns and more puzzles to solve. **TH**

This looks as if it will be a puzzle solver's adventure but before you tackle it, be warned that it contains truly awful puns

that are "guaranteed to make you groan".

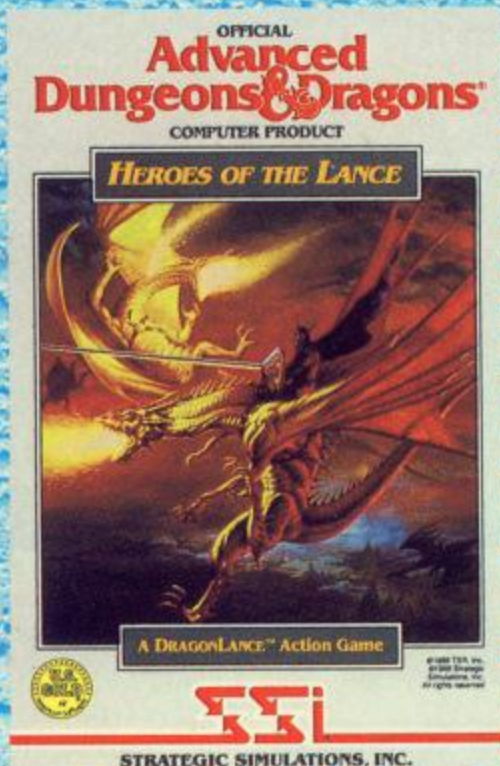
Touchline:

Title: Fish. **Supplier:** Rainbird, First Floor, 74, New Oxford Street, London, WC1A 1PS. **Tel:** 01-631 5170. **Price:** £17.99 (disk).



GAMES SPECIAL

Heroes of the Lance ing Advanced Dungeons and Dragons role-playing system the first of a series of arcade and is the result of US Gold's adventures based on the amaz-



deal with SSI whom, in turn

have a five year deal with TSR. As you will see from the full review of *Pool of Radiance* inside this issue of *Your Commodore*, SSI has concentrated on the more traditional computer role-playing style of game, whereas US Gold has opted for a new style in the hope that it will introduce arcade players to the magical world of fighters, magic users, monsters, magic and treasure.

The game is not only based on the AD&D rules but also the similarly inspired series of *Dragonlance* books. This is in response to player feedback saying that more dragons were wanted in *Dungeons and Dragons*! Perhaps your party of eight brave adventurers, the characters from the book, will regret this request because it's easier to read about dragons than fight them.

Your party, consisting of

Tanis, Raistlin, Flint Fireforge, Sturm, Brightblade, Tasslehoff Burrfoot, Caramon, Goldmoon and Riverwind, must enter the depths of a sunken city to obtain the mythical and mystical Disks of Miskail and then use them to destroy the source of immense evil. Evil entities don't become immense by letting any old Tom, Dick or Tasslehoff into their lair and so you will face a selection of hideous creatures, devilish devices and terrible traps before the game is done.

Although you have a party of eight characters, you only control one at a time and only that character is displayed on the main screen. Below that an image of the other characters is accompanied by a bar showing their health and this area is where you select the next character you want to control. Finally, the bottom left-hand

Neuromancer

It is fair to say that nearly all the role-playing games released for the home computer market so far have been fantasy based. This is fine if you enjoy talking to dwarves or slaying dragons but not everybody sees themselves as a latter-day hero and, instead, prefer something a bit more hi-tech. If you fall into this category, then *Neuromancer* might be the game you've been looking for.

The game brings together two mighty forces, William Gibson and Interplay. Based on Gibson's novel which won the Hugo, Nebula and Philip Dick science fiction awards, the game has been created by Interplay, best known for their epic fantasy trilogy, *The Bard's Tale*.

The year is 2017, the place, Japan. Greed is the dominating force in a corrupt world, a world which is hooked into a giant computer. Information on any subject you care to name is instantly available from world communication networks. You play the part of a



futuristic hacker. This pursuit is not only frowned upon everywhere but is also risky in *extremis* because anyone caught in the act is likely to find their life expectancy suddenly reduced to zero.

As the hacker, you roam the streets of Japan looking both for better equipment and, as always, for more information. A tip here, a password there, anything so long as it allows you further into the system, for whoever controls the software, controls the world.

One possible task is to find a way into the government and corporate computer systems, or how about using your software to melt the ICE (Intrusion Countermeasures Electronics) that is used in protective layers to guard the Cyberspace databases.

Once inside Cyberspace, you may find that you are no longer alone and that there are other people willing to share their information with you, for a price. The more you learn, the more you are able to learn.

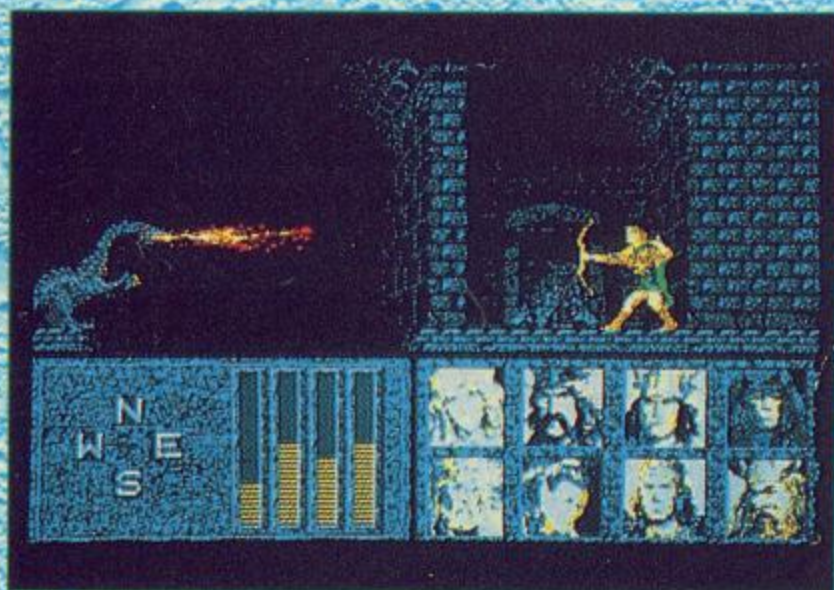
Role-playing games are not renowned for their sound effects but *Neuromancer* features a soundtrack originally written for the game by Devo. At this point, I should point out that I have never heard of Devo and so I'm not sure whether this is a good or a bad thing! Apparently the song *Some Things Never Change* stands a good chance of being released as a single so presumably someone thinks it's okay.

Should you get totally stuck, I suppose that you could always read the book or, if you are too lazy even to do that, you can wait for the film to be released. Remember though, this is a lot more serious than leaving rude messages on bulletin boards. Hacking can seriously damage your health – but think of the rewards if you succeed... **GRH**

Touchline:

Title: *Neuromancer* **Supplier:** Electronic Arts, Langley Business Centre, 11-49 Station Road, Langley, Berks SL3 8YN. **Tel:** (0793) 49442 **Price:** TBA.

GAMES SPECIAL



corner contains a compass that lights up to show the direction you can go if you pass any doors or passageways. This means you can keep the action going without inching along a corridor looking for a door.

The graphics are superb, particularly the way the differ-

ent characters move (some run, others sprint and Raistlin eerily glides along without actually touching the floor), and the monsters that you will have to fight, including the dragons, are superb.

The style of combat depends on the character you're

controlling, some will wield swords and axes or anything else they can lay their hands on, other prefer to attack from a distance with bows, whereas the rest use magic either from memorised spells, scrolls, rings or potions. Magic can also give you protection through enchanted armour or shields which reduce the chances of being hit but knowing who to send into battle and using your own fighting skills will be your best defence.

The game is entirely joystick controlled, which may not sound surprising, but this fact becomes a little more impressive when you realise that you not only select characters and move them around the dungeons, meet and fight monsters and pick up treasure, gems and weapons using this humble device, but also select and cast spells at the click of a button.

When you actually see the effect of the spell, a simple message isn't enough for this game, so a blue aura surrounds a charmed monster and fire bolts leap from your fingers while casting a spell.

Add to all this the superb background graphics including a waterfall, the Gully Dwarf lift system and two precariously balanced cooking pots and you have a game that just oozes quality.

Mark my words, this game is going to be BIG and, along with Origin's Times of Lore, will introduce many more to the magical world of roleplaying games. **TH**

Touchline:

Title: Heroes of the Lance. **Supplier:** US Gold, Units 2/3, Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX. **Tel:** 021-356 3388.

Afterburner

Afterburner, the game that stunned the arcade fraternity with its climb in, pitch and roll, simulator console will soon appear on the C64, thanks to Activision's massive development team of programmers, artists and musicians. The conversion work is nearly completed and Afterburner is ready

for take off in December.

Afterburner was a massive gamble for arcade aces, Sega, because of the extra costs incurred by replacing the usual stand-up cabinet with a full simulator that moved in response to the controls. The hydraulic simulator certainly added to the Afterburner expe-

rience but would the public think it was worth the extra money they would have to pay (as much as £1 a game)? They did, in droves, and it shot up the all time earners chart and became the number one arcade game.

Just because it was an arcade smash doesn't mean it will convert well. In fact, many said it couldn't be done. After all, a C64 doesn't compare with an hydraulic simulator controlled by a computer with three megabytes of memory!

Work on the game began at Activision's Software Studios back in March and at last it's taking shape, making the team confident that Afterburner will be ready in December.

Your craft is an F-14 fighter and, as you'd know if you climbed inside the arcade version, it's a plane that's capable of some amazing speeds and breath-taking manoeuvres. Armed with a cannon and a small, but important, number of Vulcan missiles, the F-14 is sent on a deadly mission to intercept enemy bombers. This will be far from easy as the sky

rapidly becomes crowded with enemy aircraft, bullets and missiles.

Supersonic dogfights have little in common with those fought with Spitfires because everything is now computer controlled and happens in a instant. The C64 version promises to have all the furious flying action of the original, including a full 360 degree roll. Even this freedom of movement may not save you from the enemy flak and you'll get a painful close-up of the superb graphic landscapes as you plummet downwards in a ball of flame.

It will be this gameplay that makes or breaks Afterburner and it's got plenty to offer, my favourite part being the locking on, launching and eventual impact of a missile as it takes out an enemy plane. **TH**

Touchline:

Title: Afterburner. **Supplier:** Activision (Mediagenic), Activision House, 23, Pond Street, Hampstead, London NW3 2PN. **Tel:** 01-431 1101. **Price:** £9.99 (cass) £14.99 (disk).



GAMES SPECIAL

IRON LORD

The traditional adventure, once such an integral part of the software industry, is now going through a series of major evolutionary steps. The public are no longer satisfied with text-only games, crude parsers and wasted hours searching for exactly the right combinations of words necessary to solve a particular puzzle.

For an adventure to sell well, it is now essential to have stunning graphics and sophisticated parsers. Alternatively, the emphasis has shifted from puzzle solving to exploration and strategy with the recent explosion in role-playing games. Iron Lord from Ubi Soft seeks to fill the middle ground between these two extremes.

I had not come across Ubi Soft before. They are a leading French company who have recently signed a licensing deal for Electronic Arts to sell and distribute their games over here.



Apart from Iron Lord, not going to get very far other titles in their first batch of releases include Puffy's Saga, an arcade adventure, and Skateball, a combination of soccer skills and Rollerball violence all set in a futuristic ice stadium.

Set in the Middle Ages, Iron Lord is a Prince of the Realm and a Knight of the Order of the Iron Mask. For the past five years, he has been away fighting a Crusade in the Holy Land. When he returns home, he discovers that his father has been deposed by a wicked uncle. What was once a contented country is now stricken under a reign of terror and oppression.

Before he can recover the throne and restore peace to the land, he must first raise an army. One man on his own is

not going to get very far because spies, traitors and assassins are everywhere and, as the Iron Lord, you must be careful who you talk to and watch your back at all times. No-one is going to believe you when you come along claiming to be the Crown Prince so you will need to prove your birthright through trials of combat.

These arcade sequences are a major part of the game and you will need to display skills in archery, arm wrestling, gambling and swordplay. Sword fighting looks particularly effective as you get a 3-D view of your opponent and your sword arm.

The whole game is graphically represented. Thus, when you move from town to town, there is a large-scale map of the

surrounding countryside displayed, with the Iron Lord on horseback depicted riding along the road. As you enter a town, the display changes again as you are presented with a close-up of the individual buildings around you. Further close-ups are shown if you get involved with one of the arcade-style tasks.

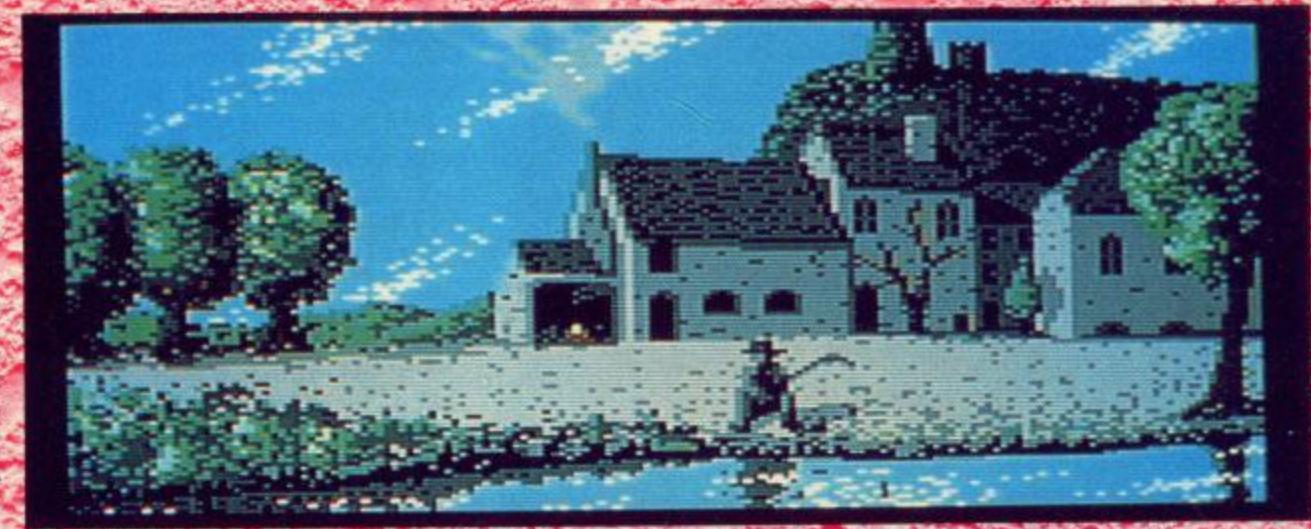
Iron Lord is obviously designed to capture the attention of game players who would not normally touch adventures but that doesn't mean that strategy fans will not enjoy it. If you had to liken it to any other game, then Defender of the Crown from Cinemaware springs immediately to mind – similar graphics, gameplay and storyline!

Iron Lord should prove to be enough of a challenge to keep the wicked uncle on the throne for some time to come.

GRH

Touchline:

Title: Iron Lord **Supplier:** Ubi Soft, Electronic Arts, 11-49 Station Road, Langley, Berks SL3 8YN. **Tel:** (0753) 49442 **Price:** TBA.



GAMES SPECIAL

ROCKET RANGER



It's a great pity that Saturday cinema is no more. If you are too young to have gone yourself, ask your parents about their weekly trip down to the local fleapit, the attempts to sneak in without paying, the howls of protest and stamping of feet when the projector broke down and, finally, the mass exodus from the cinema accompanied by ear-splitting shrieks of whatever sound effect made the greatest impact during the show.

One of the highlights of the Saturday morning show was the serial. This had a somewhat traditional format and you could guarantee that the hero would start off by escaping from last week's impossible situation, only to find himself caught up in another even more dastardly trap about half an hour later. Somehow, the action never seemed to match up to the trailer, which packed

all the highlights from 13 half-hour episodes into one five-minute, action-packed extravaganza.

The people at Cinemaware obviously thoroughly enjoyed their Saturday morning treats and their latest game, *Rocket Ranger*, is based on one of those early series which was recently revived for showing on BBC2. It would have been all too easy to ridicule the whole concept but it is a measure of the author's fond memories that this doesn't happen, despite a storyline that stretches credibility further than most computer games.

The story starts off with the idea that the Germans were victorious in World War II and that Hitler and his cronies now control not only the Earth, but also large chunks of the universe through their technological supremacy in the field of rocketry.

You play the part of Government Scientist Cody, a member of the resistance fighters and someone determined to wipe this evil off the face of the Earth etc, etc. Throw in a kidnapped, eccentric professor, his beautiful daughter, a fair amount of heaving cleavage, a few spies, some torture and several scantily clad zombie slaves and you soon get the idea.

A lot of the game revolves around being able to use your jet pack correctly. You need to carry sufficient lunarium fuel to get you to your next destination but the more you carry, the harder it is to take-off. Failure is greeted by crashing into the parade ground at Fort Dix, if you get your timing wrong, or plummeting into the ocean should you not have sufficient lunarium on board.

There are eight arcade sequences within the game

including the interception of zeppelins and taking on of entire German fighter plane squadrons. Cope with these, and the zombie sex-slaves are no problem! Coupled with all this, there is a strategic part of the game in which you have to discover five parts of a spaceship and your supplies of lunarium.

As with all Cinemaware games, the graphics and sound effects are spectacular and it is noticeable that the gameplay has been made considerably more challenging than some of their earlier titles. Pure, escapist fun! **GRH**

Touchline:

Title: *Rocket Ranger* **Supplier:** Cinemaware/Mirrorsoft, Headway House, 66-73 Shoe Lane, London EC4P 4AB. **Tel:** 01-377 4645. **Price:** £14.99 (C64) £29.99 (Amiga).

GAMES SPECIAL

The Games Summer Edition



It had to happen. When Epyx released the Games Winter Edition in the summer I just knew the Summer Edition was coming in the winter. I also knew it would be worth the wait.

The 'Games' series have always set the pace for sports' simulations and seem to get better and better, confounding those who thought the series had to end with Winter Games. This is the fourth compendium since then and the seventh overall.

Now eight players can represent any of 24 countries, each with their own flag and national anthem, in eight gruel-

ling events. You'll need both strength and timing to clear the bar in the demanding pole vault event but that's just a taste of things to come because next you get a chance to try a circular swing, salto turn or long hang kip while going through your routine on the

unparallel bars. The gymnastic rings is another equally demanding event in which you strive to perfect inverted hangs, shoulderstands and the punishing pikes as you try to impress the crowd, judges and go for Gold.

The Hammer event

demands strength and power to hurl the weight further than anyone else whereas, in contrast, diving requires precision and agility. Finally, there are still the gruelling cycling, hurdles and archery events to test whatever abilities you have left after that lot.



Thunderblade

US Gold is in the enviable position of being poised to have its third consecutive Christmas number one smash hit. In 1986, it was the monsters, magic and mayhem of Gauntlet, last year it was Outrun, and this year US Gold are putting everything behind this coin-op conversion of Thunderblade.

Thunderblade is actually the arcade sequel to Sega's Afterburner which is Mediagenic's tip for the top. Will these two go head to head for the top spot? That will only become clear by Christmas because both are scheduled for December launches.

The Thunderblade of the title is a mean flying machine that bristles with accurate and sophisticated weaponry and has the power to outmanoeuvre even the fastest jet fighter. It will be your job to fly this on four missions.

Your first sortie is into a city where you have to blast your way through skyscrapers under

a constant onslaught by a persistent enemy. The graphics here are particularly impressive as you can swoop down and climb up between the towering skyscrapers, adding depth to a shoot-em-up for the first time.

If you survive the city attack, you then fly out to sea to attack what's described as a

military ship, covered in so many defence systems that it's hard to imagine how it stays afloat.

In the first two missions, the game is played as if you were looking down on top of Thunderblade. As you head back inland, it's time to change your view to a head-on display (as

opposed to heads up). You still see Thunderblade but this time it's heading straight towards the action. Enemy fighters and gunships constantly fire at you as you fly through a rocky canyon and then onwards into dense, lush forests. This tilting display adds a new feel to the game and I wonder how many will prefer the top down style to the full frontal assault. Either way, the action is still non-stop and the graphics superb.

Thunderblade has been selected as the Pepsi Challenge Game of the Year and is therefore sure to get the promotional support of this drinks' giant. How about, 'Pepsi quenches your thirst, Thunderblade quenches your thirst for action.'

Whatever the ads may say, prepare for take-off in December and look for this high flyer shooting straight to the top. **TH**

Touchline:

Title: Thunderblade. **Supplier:** US Gold, Units 2/3, Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX. **Tel:** 021-353 3388.



GAMES SPECIAL

Even the briefest look at a motion, action replay option Games Summer Edition screen-shot will show the improvements in graphics that have developed from side on views to 3D almost TV-style presentation. For example, the cycling screen is split into three, two 3D sections depicting each rider with the third showing their positions on the track. Similarly, the archery screen includes an insert so you can zoom in on your bowmanship, and the hammer throwing begins with a close-up of the competitor in the nets and then zooms out to cover the throw. All this adds a new dimension to the Games format.

The Games Summer Edition goes further still and is more than just another collection of events. There is a coaching manual in the instruction book as well as a slow

motion, action replay option for the gymnastic events so that you can closely examine your technique to correct any tiny errors that have stopped you scoring maximum.

Epyx's Games have already set new standards with a series of superb sports simulations and, although this Summer Edition will appear long after the Olympics have left Seoul, it will be the sports game for others to beat for the next four years.

TH

Touchline:

Title: The Games Summer Edition. **Supplier:** Epyx (US Gold) Units 2/3 Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX. **Tel:** 021 356 3388. **Price:** £9.99 (cass) £14.99 (disk).

Around the World in Eighty Days

Question: What's green and goes round the world in eighty days? **Answer:** Phileas Frog!

Pandora may not be the best-known software house in the industry but they are beginning to develop something of a name for themselves. Their first release, Eagle's Nest, was one of the better Gauntlet clones, released at a time when there was a spate of them, noteworthy because it was set in the Second World War rather than against the usual fantasy background.

Now, they have turned to the classics for their latest title which is based on the book by Jules Verne and programmed for them by Rainbow Arts. It's a sign of the times that most people will probably be more familiar with the cinema version rather than the book, even the press release states that there is only a passing relationship between the book and the game.

The journey starts with a bet. Relaxing in his London club, the Reform in Pall Mall, Phileas Fogg (not Phineas as is usually written) makes a bet with five of his fellow members. The amount is twenty thousand pounds – a huge amount in those days – and the subject of the wager is that he can make a tour of the world in eighty days (1872), or less, returning to the club whence he started.

Pausing only to return home to pick up both his manservant Passepartout and his carpet bag full of money, Fogg's trip begins, only to develop very quickly into a series of adventures. The journey is scheduled to pass through India, Japan and North America although, naturally, you will find yourself making the odd detour. The best laid plans of mice and men...

Money management is crucial to the game. Starting with twenty thousand pounds (half your personal fortune), you have to ensure that you always have sufficient funds for tickets, bribery and sundry other emergencies. Amongst the modes of travel used are train, an assortment of waterborne vessels and elephant. To hinder your progress further, there is the evil Mr Fix, an inept detective convinced that Fogg was responsible for a large bank robbery, who is out to thwart our hero at every turn.

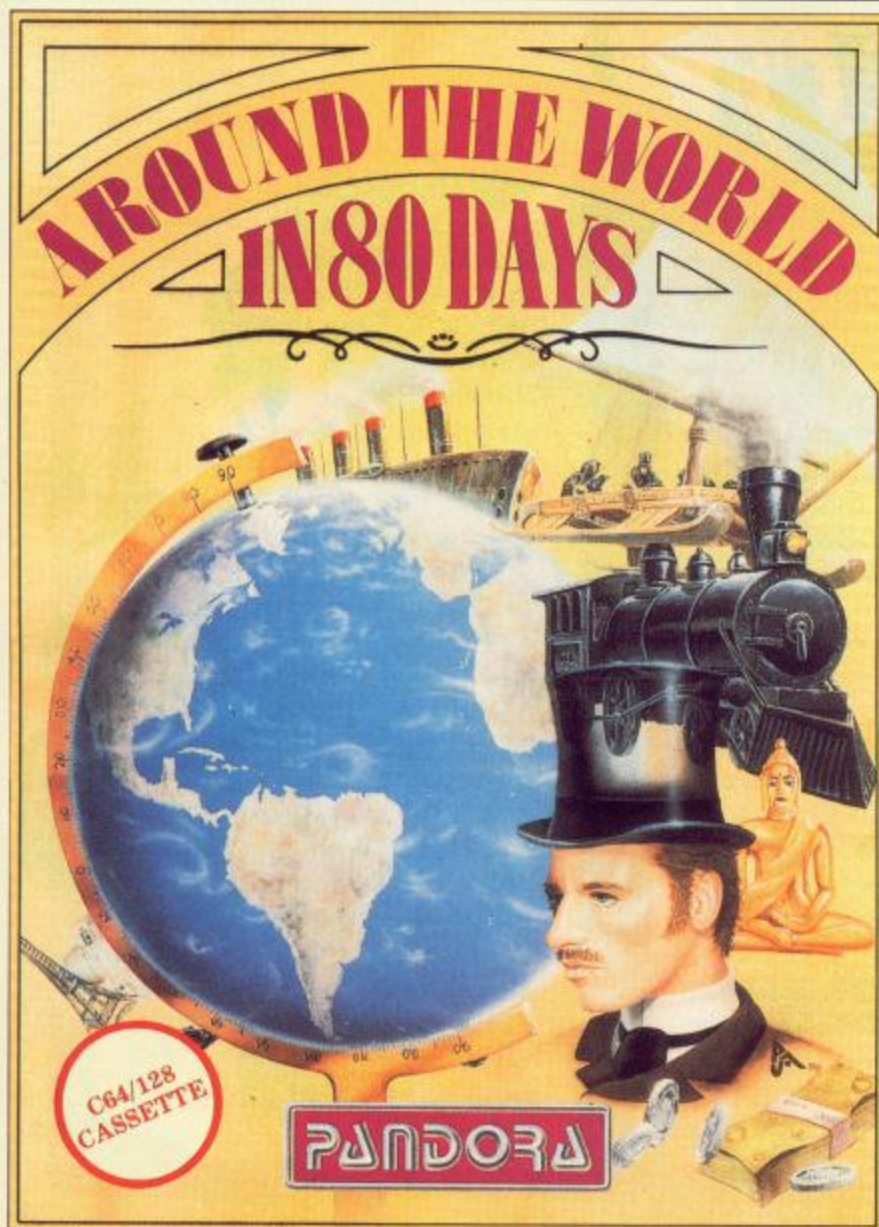
The game combines arcade sequences with strategic planning of your travels and you can expect to have to battle your way out of an Indian temple, find a path across the jungle, avoid a pack of man-eating wolves in North America, escape from the London dungeons and even perform an acrobatic display to get yourself out of another mess.

The game combines arcade sequences with strategic music and sound effects to match. As everybody knows, Fogg managed to win his bet by virtue of travelling round the world east to west and effectively gaining an extra day when he crossed the International Date Line. Now it is up to you to prove that it was no fluke.

GRH

Touchline:

Title: Around the World in Eighty Days **Supplier:** Pandora, Mercury House, Calleva Park, Aldermaston, Berks RG7 4QW. **Tel:** (07356) 77421 **Price:** £8.95 (cass).



OPERATION WOLF

Operation Wolf

This is arcade action at it's best. Armed with a few sub-machine gun clips and enough rockets to keep the main enemy assault at bay, you must blast your way through villages and swamps and jungle screens to rescue a group of hostages, in screen after screen of combat.

The screen display is split into two with the right hand side occupied by a display showing the amount of ammo you have left, your all-important score and the number of enemy soldiers, tanks and helicopters remaining in this section of the game. It's unlikely that you will ever have time to give this more than a passing glance for, as soon as you've tightened your boots, slid your knife into its shoulder sheath and released the safety catch on your automatic sub-machine gun, the enemy quickly strikes.

The main display, a 3D view of the village, jungle clearing or swamp that you're in, begins to scroll slightly as the attack begins. In this game it pays to keep moving.

Suddenly, they're on you. Enemy troops charge at you with guns blazing and only well-aimed shots can save you. After mowing them down, there's no time to congratulate

yourself as another wave attacks. This time they've brought in reinforcements as paratroopers land to join in the assault. Just as you're about to cut them down before they land to hurl their grenades at you, a soldier appears right in front of you and he's poised to fire!

If you survive that lot you may even stand a chance against the tanks that roll across the screen. You can take these out either by scoring several hits with your gun or by unleashing one of your rockets at them and then watch the flames engulf them. The choice is yours but, either way, it must be destroyed before it destroys you.

If you think the tanks are bad then just wait until the helicopter gunships appear. These have to be taken out by rockets or you won't live long

enough to try anything else.

Even the helicopters wouldn't be too difficult on their own but when you're facing a gunship, tank and a screenful of paratroopers and ground troops, things start to get a little difficult and this isn't one of those games with a smart bomb to get you out of trouble when the going gets too tough. You have to fight it out to the bitter end.

Unfortunately, you can't just keep the fire button pressed and blast anything and everything that moves or you'll quickly run out of ammo and shoot some of the innocent stretcher bearers that always manage to get in my way. This not only troubles your conscience but also your score as you lose points.

It's not all bad news because you'll also find extra packs of bullets and rockets to rearm yourself and bottles of medicine to patch up your wounds and let you fight a little longer.

If you like your games fast and tough then you'll love Operation Wolf. It's been a smash hit in the arcades and is sure to repeat its success on the C64. **TH**

Touchline:

Title: Operation Wolf **Supplier:** Ocean, 6 Central Street, Manchester, Lancs M2 5NS. **Tel:** 061-832 6633.

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